

# An afternoon with Bei and Beistyle

By Li Jing (China Daily)  
2010-03-11 11:07

The Beistyle 2010 Spring Collection Fashion Show was held in the cozy environment of the Courtyard Restaurant on March 7. Perched on the moat and overlooking the Forbidden City, the Courtyard Restaurant is a perfect place to witness how the East blends itself so elegantly with the West.

Chen Bei, founder of the brand Beistyle and hostess of the fashion show welcomed her guests, saying “the goal of inviting you all here today is to give you all-round enjoyment.” Indeed, my three-hour experience in the Courtyard was fully enriched by the restaurant’s cozy environment, the delicate cuisine, the exquisite designs and the designer’s irresistible personal charm.

As the old Chinese saying goes “Good things never come easy.” I had some difficulty in finding the Courtyard Restaurant at the start, because it was too “low-profile” (it has no visible signboard, and surrounded by a small forest of bamboo), but it was definitely worth the trouble. Immediately after stepping in the door, I felt myself completely refreshed by its interior design—artistic and westernized. But what really makes it unique is the visual feast available inside—by sitting in the window seats, you can have a close watch of the Forbidden City, so spectacular and oriental, providing a strong contrast to the restaurant’s occidental design.

Before the start of the show, Bei treated her guests with a real treat—authentic western cuisine. As far as I’m concerned, the Honey Glazed Eel and Black Truffle Puree really hit the spot. Juniper Scented Breast of Duck and Roast Fillet of Atlantic Salmon were both so delicate and delicious that my curiosity almost drove me to rush into the kitchen and see who this magical chef was. Nougatine Pate, rich with flavors of cranberry and sesame muesli was my favorite that day. I felt my tongue was about to melt with the silky ice cream.





Lunch time



Guests enjoying delicate cuisine

The climax came when the fashion show finally got started. The half-hour fashion show drew the full attention of all guests present. While I was watching the show, the clothes' exquisite designs kept reminding me how perfectly and elegantly the designer had balanced herself between East and West. The 2010 Spring Collection not only followed her consistent style—integration of the orient and the occident, fine texture, simple lines and radiating natural feminine beauty and sexiness—but also seemed to shine a fresh new light. When I interviewed Bei after the show, she told me that compared with her previous designs, the 2010 collection was more youthful. As the owner of a brand whose loyal customer base is formed of high-end consumers, Bei's new move not only shows her keen market insight—success, nowadays, depends more and more on younger women—but also reveals her intention to design for all women who are in love with fashion and beauty.



Bei talks to her models



Bei appeared on the stage at the end of the show

Bei's appearance on the stage at the end of the show really caught my eye. Although I had already known she was 1.75 meters high and had seen several photos of her, I wasn't fully prepared for her actual beauty and grace. Watching her cat-walking with the models, all I could think was that she was by no means less a model than a fashion designer. When we started talking, her unique personal charm caught me again. Listening to her description of her life in Paris was indeed fascinating; I couldn't help but feel attracted by her voice and confidence. It turned out that at the initial stage of her career, Bei used to be a model as well. As she unfolded her strengths in more and more facets of the fashion industry, she was gradually recognized as a professional designer.

In 2007, after 7 years of Parisian life, Bei returned to China and settled down in Beijing. When asked why she returned China, Bei's answer was firm and concise: "because I wanted simplicity. When I found out the rules in the domestic market were actually simpler than those in the overseas market, I made my decision without much hesitation."



Bei with her customers/friends

When the topic moved to her baby girl, Linlin, I captured a sparkle in Bei's eyes. I could tell she was very proud of her daughter, or, more accurately speaking, her masterpiece in life. But she also couldn't conceal her slight guilt over Linlin—due to Bei's busy lifestyle, Linlin lives with her grandmother in Xi'an, west China's Shaanxi province. "I definitely want to be with my girl everyday, but I'm too busy now," Bei said. "When she grows up a little and my business is more stable, I will bring her with me." As early as 2007, Bei has opened a personal blog on the China Daily, jotting down tidbits of her life, her feelings, her career and, most importantly, her baby girl. <http://cblog.chinadaily.com.cn/port/beistyle/>

During my stay in the Courtyard that day, I happened to talk with a staff member in Bei's studio and found out another reason to respect Bei. Most companies only fill job vacancies with experienced workers at the initial stages of business growth; some even retain such a conservative attitude on staff selection long after their businesses have matured into stability. However, as a young designer at a crucial stage of her business's development, Bei has the courage to recruit green hands and cultivate them; she said it is her pleasure to watch them grow. As a fresh graduate myself, I really respect her attitude. May all her dreams come true.

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